**SEMINAR AND SPECIAL TOPICS IN MIDDLE GRADES EDUCATION**

**EDUC 643**

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**Texts:** Edwards, C. H. (2005) *Teaching and Learning in Middle and Secondary Schools: Student Empowerment Through Learning Communities.* Upper Saddle River: New Jersey.

Hersch, P. (1998) *A Tribe Apart: A Journey into the Heart of American Adolescence.* New York: New York.

**A New Culture of Learning: Cultivating: Cultivating the Imagination for a World of Constant Change** by Douglas Thomas and John Seely Brown

**Course Description:** This course will focus on an examination and discussion of current issues in middle level education. Particular attention will be paid to 21st Century Learning and how to prepare middle level learners for future challenges that educators cannot even anticipate.

**Rationale:** Since shared adult agendas and student priorities guide decision making in middle level education, teachers’ effectiveness is often linked to their development of a deeper, more comprehensive understanding of early adolescent learners. Middle level educators who design and implement instruction, which is developmentally responsive to the needs of young adolescents increase opportunities for students’ achievement. Through their planning and implementation of developmentally responsive instruction, teachers facilitate the widest possible range of social, intellectual, emotional, moral, and physical experiences in order to meet all needs of the young adolescent.

**Communication:**

I will communicate with you primarily through the course page I have created on BLACKBOARD (WEB CT). Here you will find the syllabus, handouts, assessments, etc. Also, it is here that I will notify you of emergencies, changes in plans, adaptations for assignments, etc. **PLEASE CHECK THIS SITE OFTEN.** IF I make a change in assignments or post information, etc., **you** are responsible for having checked the course page and being up-to-date. Failure to see a change does not grant you an exception from any assignment or change in plans, so my advice remains – **check early, check often**. **BE SURE TO NOTICE ANNOUNCEMENTS.** However, if you need to make me aware of something, you should e-mail me via regular G-WU e-mail. When you communicate with me via e-mail, please do so only from your G-WU address. Other addresses (Yahoo, Hotmail, etc.) often do not make it past the filters in our server. We will use several of the BLACKBOARD options for class work rather than hand- outs/paper assignments in class, so make sure that you are familiar with the environment.

**Participation:**

Participation in class, individual assignments, and group assignments is mandatory. In order for you to be successful in this class, it is essential that you are prepared and ready to participate at each class meeting.

**Attendance:**

Students are expected to be in class. Please remember that Gardner-Webb University maintains a 75% attendance policy. Students should realize that missing a class does not grant an exemption from any work, assignments, readings, etc. ***It is incumbent upon the student, not the professor, to be responsible for assignments, both those on the syllabus and any made in*** ***class. Online attendance will be taken based on participation in weekly online discussions.***

**Accommodations:**

If your learning or participation in this class might be affected in any way by a disability recognized under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), you will need to do the following:

1. Register with the Noel Program for the Disabled at Gardner Webb University at (704) 406-4270
2. Educate me about your disability so that I can work with you and the Noel Program to arrange necessary accommodations. It is important that you take both of these steps no later than the first week of the semester.

**Course Objectives:**

Through the successful performance of the activities in this course, the student will be able to:

1. Understand and apply current middle level research in the classroom.
2. Create responsive middle school environments based on the personhood of the adolescent.
3. Articulate and implement curriculum theories, research, and exemplary practices concerning various topics of controversy facing middle level educators.
4. Articulate and implement various support structures for middle school students in their academic, intellectual, and emotional growth.
5. Exhibit high expectations for students and express dialogue that is mature, sensitive, and discreet when counseling middle level students.
6. Work in and create strong team relationships including a working relationship with colleagues, students, and parents.

**Learning Tasks/Activities/Learner Responsibilities:**

1. Read *A Tribe Apart* and respond to online discussion questions weekly. (scored with Discussion Rubric)
2. Read *A New Culture of Learning* and respond to online discussion questions weekly (scored with Discussion Rubric)
3. Choose two (depending on size of class) of the following topics and prepare a one-hour presentation/discussion/activity for the class. You may complete this assignment in pairs or small groups. Check the tentative schedule for dates for each topic. Topics are as follows (or if you have another topic you would like to discuss, we can talk about it): (scored with Presentation Rubric)
   1. Merit Pay
   2. Teacher Evaluation
   3. Grouping
   4. Gender-based Education
   5. Web 2.0 Tools
   6. Bullying
   7. Motivation
   8. Mastery Learning
   9. Brain Research as it pertains to Education
   10. Testing
4. Choose three (depending on size of class) chapters from *Teaching and Learning in Middle and Secondary Schools* and prepare a one-hour presentation/discussion/activity for the class. You may complete this assignment individually or in pairs. Check the tentative schedule for dates for each chapter. (scored with Presentation Rubric)
5. Complete a 20-minute presentation of the first three chapters of your capstone. You may not use power point, but you must use some type of multi-media. (scored with Presentation Rubric)
6. Capstone Journal Reflections:Students are expected to keep a journal of their capstone process that reflects each of the NC Professional Teaching Standards. Students will be required to post five of these journals throughout the course. Due dates will be indicated in the syllabus. Classmates are to post responses as outlined in the Discussion Rubric. (scored as Pass/Fail for capstone seminar)
7. Capstone Paper: Students must finalize drafts of Chapters 1-3 of the capstone and make sure their IRB is complete. (scored as Pass/Fail for capstone seminar)

**Grades:**

The grading scale will be as follows:

A 95-100 = Excellent Work

A- 90-94 = Exceeds Expectations

B+ 85-89 = Good Solid Work

B 80-84 = Meets Expectations

B- 76-79 = Does Not Fully Meet Expectations

C 75-79 = Not Graduate Quality Work

F 74 and below = Unacceptable Work

**Tentative Course Calendar: Subject to change at instructor’s discretion. (TLMSS is *Teaching and Learning in Middle and Secondary Schools*; ATA is *A Tribe Apart;* NCL is *A New Culture of Learning*)**

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| **Date** | **Topic** | **Assignment Due**  (In-class/*Online)* |
| **Week 1** | Introduction/Welcome; Learning Communities (Chapter 1, TLMSS); Technology in Schools | Purchase texts, Presentation selections |
| **Week 2** | **Ch. Presentation:** Student Differences and Needs  **Topic Presentation:** Gender-Based Education | TLMSS Chs. 1 and 2  *ATA Prologue- Ch. 2*  *Capstone Journal 1 due* |
| **Week 3** | **Ch. Presentations:** Autonomy and Student Empowerment  **Technology Presentation** by Guest Speakers | TLMSS Ch. 3  *ATA Ch. 3-5* |
| **Week 4** | **Ch. Presentation:** How Students Learn  **Topic Presentation:** Grouping | TLMSS Ch. 4  *ATA Ch. 6-8*  *Capstone draft chs.1-3 due* |
| **Week 5** | **Ch. Presentation:** Multicultural Education and Exceptionality in Learning Communities  **Topic Presentation:** Bullying | TLMSS Ch. 5  *ATA Ch. 9-12*  *Capstone Journal 2 due* |
| **Week 6** | **Ch. Presentations:** Teaching as Reflection and Decision-Making  **Topic Presentation:** Teacher Evaluation | TLMSS Ch. 6  *ATA Ch. 13-15* |
| **Week 7** | **Ch. Presentation:** Instructional Planning in Learning Communities  **Topic Presentation:** Testing | TLMSS Ch. 7  *ATA Ch. 16-19* |
| **Week 8** | **Ch. Presentation:** Intellectual Development and Social Growth  **Topic Presentation:** Merit Pay | TLMSS Ch. 8  *ATA Ch. 20- Epilogue*  *Capstone Journal 3 due* |
| **Week 9** | **Ch. Presentation:** Motivation in Learning Communities  **Topic Presentation:** Web 2.0 Tools | TLMSS Ch. 9  *NCL Ch. 1*  *Capstone draft chs. 1-3 due* |
| **Week 10** | **Ch. Presentation:** Discipline in Learning Communities  **Topic Presentation:** Brain Research as it pertains to Education | TLMSS Ch. 10  *NCL Ch. 2* |
| **Week**  **11** | **Ch. Presentation:** Measuring and Evaluating Learning and Schooling  Capstone Presentations | TLMSS Ch. 11  *NCL Ch. 3*  *Capstone Journal 4 due* |
| **Week 12** | **Ch. Presentation:** Teacher Improvement  Capstone Presentations | TLMSS Ch. 12  *NCL Ch. 4 & 5* |
| **Week**  **13** | **Ch. Presentation:** Working with Parents and Community  Capstone Presentations | TLMSS Ch. 13  *NCL Ch. 6* |
| **Week**  **14** | **Topic Presentation:** Motivation  Capstone Presentations | *NCL Ch. 7*  *Capstone Journal 5 due* |
| **Week 15** | **Topic Presentation:** Mastery Learning  Capstone Presentations | *NCL Ch. 8 & 9* |

***ATA*** Discussions:

Prologue-Chapter 2: This book came about through honest conversation with teenagers. What are your thoughts about conversing at the level with your students? Have you ever approached this level of conversation? If so, did you learn from it? Are there concerns about this?

Chapter 3-5: What are your thoughts about how the school dealt with the "political speech" incident in Mrs. Nance's class? How would you have handled it?

Chapters 6-8: What are your thoughts about the kids' take on the ethics of cheating? Do you still see this as an issue in classrooms?

Chapters 9-12: Is peer pressure the most important thing in the lives of our students? If so, how can we help to influence our students? Is that our job, as educators?

Chapters 13-15: What is the most surprising/shocking thing you have read so far? What is the most interesting? Why?

Chapters 16-19: How often do you recognize those kids, who, like Chris, can be respectful and turn in completed work and just be skating by(and bored)? What do/would you do about those students?

Chapters 20-Epilogue: What are your thoughts on homework? Consider Ann, for whom homework has come to represent all that is wrong in her life with her family, and therefore does not do it for emotional reasons, but is otherwise a good student.

***NCL*** Discussions:

Chapter 1 – What do the concepts expressed in this chapter mean for your classroom? Why?

Chapter 2 – What does “a new culture of learning” mean? How can this impact your teaching?

Chapter 3 – How hard is it to embrace change? Can this chapter help you affect change in your setting?

Chapters 4 & 5 – Explain how the concept of learning in the collective applies to you as a professional. How can this impact your classroom?

Chapter 6 – How can inquiry shape the curriculum, especially in light of the implementation of the Common Core?

Chapter 7 – Does the concept of play make you revisit activities you plan for your students? How feasible do you think it would be to incorporate play into your classroom?

Chapters 8 & 9 – Did this book make you rethink any of your current practices? Are these concepts that can be easily adapted for your classroom? Why or why not?